

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 3306

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EG US UR
SUBJECT: AKOPOV CALLS ON DCM

REF: MOSCOW 2488

1. ON FEB 24 SOVIET DCM AKOPOV, WHO HAS SERVED IN EGYPT
FOR TOTAL OF 12 YEARS, CALLED ON DCM FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION.
AKOPOV MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS OF INTEREST.

2. SYTENKO VISIT. VISIT WAS RESULT LONG STANDING GOE REQUEST
FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH USSR. SYTENKO REITERATED SOVIET POSITION
ON GENEVA MEPC AS CONTAINED IN OCTOBER 2 STATEMENT. EGYPTIANS
GAVE THEIR VIEWS AT LENGTH WITH SOME NEW NUANCES. FOR EXAMPLE,
GOE PRESSED HARD FOR CONVENING OF MEPC IN MARCH IF ONLY AS
FORMALITY AND THEY SUGGESTED THAT PLO PARTICIPATE AS INDEPENDENT
PARTY ON BASIS UNGA RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING PLO RATHER THAN 242
OR 338. IT OBIOUS THAT EGYPT TRYING TO MEET PALESTINIAN OBJECTIONS
THAT STAND IN WAY OF GENEVA.

3. BILATERAL RELATIONS. USSR REMAINS READY TO IMPROVE BILATERAL
RELATIONS AS EVIDENCED BY GESTURE OF STYTENKO VISIT. TRADE DELGATION
HAD, IN FACT, BEEN POSTPONED IN LATE JANUARY BECAUSE OF
NECESSITY OF DEPMIN FOREIGN TRADE GRISHIN GOING TO NORTH KOREA,
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VIETNAM AND INDONESIA AND NOT, AS SOME EGYPTIANS BELIEVE, FIR
POLITICAL REASONS. TRADE DEL IS NOW SCHEDULED TO COME BEGINNING
OF MARCH. IN ADDITION, THERE IS CURRENTLY A DELEGATION OF
TECHNICANS DISCUSSING PROBLEMS AT HELWAN IRON AND STEEL COMPLEX.
IT IS, HOWEVER, IMPOSSIBLE FOR ONE SIDE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.
IT SEEMS EGYPTIANS DON'T WANT TO, AND FEB. 19 PRAVDA REPLY
TO SADAT'S MEMOIRS IN OCTOBER MAGAZINE (REFTEL) WAS SOVIET

RESPONSE. AKOPOV SAID NOT TO RESPOND TO SUCH ATTACKS WOULD MEAN USSR AGREED. HE SAID WITH SOME HEAT THAT EVERYONE KNOWS USSR SUPPLIED ARMS TO EGYPT EVEN AFTER THE OCTOBER WAR DESPITE WHAT SADAT SAYS. AKOPOV MADE POINT OF SAYING USSR NOT AGAINST EGYPT IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH US AND OTHER COUNTRIES. HE "PERSONALLY" BELIEVES SADAT ATTACKS ON USSR ARE TACTIC TO GET MORE AID FROM US. "TODAY, EGYPTIANS SAY ONE THING, TOMORROW ANOTHER."

HE HOTELY DENIED THAT USSR HAD ANY CONNECTION WITH JANUARY 18-19 RIOTS.

4. JORDANIAN-PLO LINK. ADAT'S SUGGESTION FOR LINK BETWEEN JORDAN AND PALESTINIAN STATE HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH RUSSIANS AND WAS UNCLEAR. IF SADAT HAD SOMETHING IN MIND LIKE CONFEDERATION OF ARAB REPUBLICS (EGYPT, SYRIA, LIBYA), EVERYONE KNOWS THIS EXISTED ONLY ON PAPER. HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHAT US ATTITUDE TOWARD LINK WAS. DCM SAID IT WAS SOMETHING FOR PARTIES CONCERNED TO WORK OUT AMONG THEMSELVES. DCM ALSO GAVE AKOPOV SUMMARY IN VERY GENERAL TERMS OF SECRETARY VANCE'S FACT FINDING MISSION AND AGREED ON DESIRABILITY OF TWO EMBASSIES STAYING IN TOUCH ON PEACE PROCESS.

5. COMMENT: INITIAL RESPONSE TO PRAVDA ATTACK WAS GOE-INSPIRED EDITORIAL IN FEB. 23 AHRAM WHICH SAYS "VICIOUS" SOVIET CAMPAIGN DESERVES ONLY CONTEMPT AND MOCKERY. IT RIDICULES UNSIGNED PRAVDA EDITORIAL AS "FRENZIED AND SPITEFUL" REACTION OF SOVIET LEADERS TO EXPOSURE OF ANTI-EGYPTIAN CONSPIRACY THAT HAS FAILED.

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6. PRAVDA EDITORIAL HIT PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE NERVES BY ATTACKING SADAT PERSONALLY AND ACCUSING HIM OF LYING ABOUT SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE ARMS AND SUPPORT FOR EGYPTIAN MILITARY (SADAT REGIME IS ACTUALLY SENSITIVE TO MORALE AND OPINION OF MILITARY SINCE JAN. 18/19 RIOTS). FURTHER EGYPTIAN ACTIONS AGAINST SOVIETS CANNOT BE RULED OUT, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT MAJOR RETALIATION SADAT COULD INITIATE WHICH WOULD NOT INJURE EGYPTIAN ECONOMY.

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